

OXFORD

MAGAZINE

No. 428 Second Week Hilary Term 2021

For most people the *Gazette* is not exactly priority reading. Moreover, during the last few years you do not so often see it around—for example, in common rooms or unopened in pigeon holes—now that two-thirds of the recipients are opting for e-copies, and it seems likely that many of our younger colleagues may only have a vague picture of it or what its purpose might be.

The *Gazette* is in fact an absolutely crucial element within our governance structure*. It is where we learn (usually for the first time) of decisions made by Council. Only then (with three weeks notice) can Congregation decide if it wants to raise issues concerning those decisions. As we know, the great majority of Council proposals go through by default (formally approved by Congregation but without discussion and, given how easy it is to ignore weekly email prompts, increasingly only noticed by a select few governance nerds). And yet without this one crucial step in the communication chain Wellington Square could act entirely without check or challenge.

In the *Gazette* two weeks ago a cryptic “General Notice” (the convention in the *Gazette* is that any expla-

Paper or Virtual

nations and rationales for Council proposals are brief and kept to an absolute minimum) informed us that GPC and Council had agreed that the *Gazette* would be on-line-only from now on and evermore. No reasons were given. This was presented as a decision already signed off, rather than being a Council proposal put in the usual way on the agenda of the next Congregation meeting.

The logical way in which one might seek further information about the background to this decision would, of course, be in Council minutes. The agenda for the Council meeting last November includes an item under GPC Reports (15 (a)) marked confidential and reading (in full): “Revised publication arrangements for the University of Oxford *Gazette*”. However, as of the end of first week, the minutes of the meeting have not yet been published on the Council website. Besides which, the reality is that members of Congregation who have ever searched published Council minutes will know that one cannot expect to find much more than a repetition of the wording of the agenda item.

So, with this move, a fundamental link in our policy-decision procedures is being peremptorily changed

Oxford Magazine publication arrangements

We are unable to publish the *Oxford Magazine* in print for the foreseeable future, as a result of COVID19-related working restrictions. Arrangements for archival copies will be made at a later date.

We will continue to publish online editions of the *Oxford Magazine* and send emails to our online subscribers. We will also send emails to our print subscribers, where we have an email address for them, so that they continue to receive the *Magazine* in an available format.

If you are a print subscriber and do not wish to receive such emails, please visit www.staffsubs.ox.ac.uk and cancel your subscription.

If you would like to set up a new email subscription, please visit www.staffsubs.ox.ac.uk if you are a current member of staff; otherwise, please email gazette@admin.ox.ac.uk.

INSIDE

● AUTHENTICATION
Page two

● REPRODUCIBLE RESEARCH
Page four

● SUSTAINABILITY
Page five

...and much more

without discussion or agreement in Congregation; and Congregation members are entitled to wonder, in the absence of further information, whether all the relevant considerations had been taken into account by those responsible. Will this decision not further disconnect us (anyway those of us who prefer paper and aim to collect back copies for easy future reference) from decision-making in the University? ** Is it not an established fact that, on balance, on-line publications are less likely to be read than paper? And what about staff without IT facilities or the disabled? **

This episode reminds us of yet another, long-standing, problem with our governance. You might have thought that we (members of Congregation, the supreme legislative body of the University with nearly 6000 members) could have a way of knowing that a policy proposal like this one was coming up so that we could at least make representations to our elected members on Council. Given the one-line notice in the Council agenda (itself routinely published on the Council website—unannounced—only a few days before a given Council meeting) how could we possibly have known anything about the substance of what was about to be decided upon?

But this is only part of the emerging general problem of internal communication that has crept up on us unnoticed over recent years. The *Gazette* apart, our only regular and up-to-date source of information regarding top-level developments in the University is the weekly “*University Bulletin*”, until a few months ago the “*Blueprint Bulletin*”, itself a spin-off from *Blueprint* magazine of old. Despite the name change, this is still the responsibility—no editor is named—of the Public Affairs Directorate (PAD) which, in addition to putting the *Gazette*, *Blueprint*, *Oxford Today*, etc together, posts selected

news items on the University’s public-facing website and prepares our press releases. The question arises: are we not reaching a point at which internal communications have become indistinguishable from external communications?

* * *

Under the arrangements up to now each of us could freely decide on the relative merits of paper or e-copies of the *Gazette* on the basis of considerations and arguments fully spelt out when the alternative options were first introduced (see *Gazette*, 23rd October, 2014, No. 5074, Vol 145). Now that choice appears to have been removed. Now Council seems to have chosen not to make information maximally available to the maximum possible number of people. Could it be that Council has forgotten its responsibility to involve staff in University affairs as much as possible through comprehensive and comprehensible internal communication channels—as a matter of principle as well as of effective management?

One has to ask, if Council’s decision is primarily to save costs, what value is being placed on essential and easily accessible information at the very moment when, to give just one example, the University has received a £100m donation for a new medical institute? Could this matter not easily have been left until Covid has receded so that proper consultations become possible again and Congregation becomes functional once more?

*The role of the *Gazette* in our governance is different from that of the *Reporter* in Cambridge; see ‘Notes from Cambridge’ in this issue.

** The Notice does mention provision of print copies for archival purposes and for paid subscribers.

B.B, T.J.H

Necessary Evils

ANDREW MARTIN

THE implementation of ‘Multi-Factor Authentication’ (MFA) is a long overdue project, and almost unavoidable, but it brings at least a little inconvenience to nearly every member of the University. That inconvenience is evidently not so little, in a notable small minority of cases, if statistics from the IT Services helpdesk are any indication—or indeed, articles in the *Oxford Magazine*.¹ Such is the challenge of improving security across the entire Collegiate University in a major project.

The best information security is invisible: it seamlessly allows the accredited users of an IT system to do their work without hindrance, creates no overhead for IT support staff, and yet completely blocks the behaviour of those who wish to steal money, disrupt operations, smear the University, misappropriate clinical trials data, read journals without paying, or compromise the privacy of staff and students.

Much of the research we do in cyber security tries to reach towards that goal, but very often invisibility lies just outside our grasp. Good security typically revolves around technical measures for technical reasons (to bor-

row a phrase). However, it must equally match patterns of human behaviour and cognition, it needs procedures and incentives aligned with the way we work (and play), and must cost (in time, money, and inconvenience) an amount commensurate with the benefit it brings. This is why in Oxford we’ve long been pursuing cyber security as an inter-disciplinary venture—both in research and teaching.

That complex interplay of issues is illustrated in the challenges faced by the University’s MFA project. The need for a change to the single sign-on (SSO) scheme was pressing, with hundreds of passwords being stolen every month. The scourge of ‘phishing’² is the most common (but not the sole) means of achieving that theft. This is unsurprising since well-meaning entreaties to click only on ‘good’ links but not ‘suspicious’ ones make one assumption too many: I for one struggle to know the difference sometimes, and I could not do my job without opening unsolicited messages.

Unsurprisingly, an Oxford password is a valuable commodity, bringing with it access to countless services—and such is the reach of SSO, the range of services available to

any individual user is quite hard to predict. The burden of a stolen password is not just felt locally: if it is sold to a ‘spammer’ (perhaps in order that they may undertake more ‘phishing’), then Oxford’s email servers gain a bad reputation for sending fake messages, and we all suffer from having our email marked as suspicious, or blocked altogether. Notwithstanding the ugliness of the neologisms, this is far from being just a hypothetical fate.

The SSO scheme has grown to embrace many kinds of data and services: it provides a tool to prevent as well as to grant access. But in that regard it is only the modern equivalent of a key to the college gate, also giving access to the post-room, the library, and the common room. To avoid carrying a large bundle of keys, the same virtual key now gives access through virtual doors right across the Collegiate University (and beyond). And a stolen key thereby may give access to untold – and to an outsider, unpredictable – riches.

Compromise of certain accounts might be a precursor to vast amounts of student personal data being stolen – with impacts not just on the individual students and the University’s reputation, but also under GDPR the prospect of a huge fine. Even the most humble student or staff account gives access to the online treasures licenced to the Bodleian: wholesale copying of journal PDFs is big business, and the prospect of the University needing to pay more for licences to cover that misappropriation should concern us all. Research data protected by SSO is not only potentially subject to theft, but also to tampering: whole clinical trials would need to be repeated if a regulator could not be satisfied that data had not been altered by an outsider.

Although many security improvements can have minimal impact, coming close to the goal of invisibility, the schemes by which authentication is undertaken are necessarily at least somewhat intrusive: whether by forcing you into an unwelcome task, recalling or safely storing ever-more complex passwords, by necessitating carrying another physical digital key, or by collecting ever-increasing amounts of personal data to use for biometric purposes. The goal of multi-factor authentication is to ally the password (which can be stolen) with something that either cannot be stolen, or if it is, is exceptionally unlikely to be stolen by the same person as the one who stole the password. Changing the authentication scheme is therefore one of the most intrusive security tasks since it affects everyone in the University.

For good or ill, multi-factor authentication is for now about the best solution available for the problem of stolen credentials. It has been in fairly widespread use for many years, but its adoption was rapid across the globe last year: several organisations I work with externally signed me up during the summer of 2020. Eventually University inertia meets the reality of a world with a surprising number of people and groups who would wish it harm. Whether it is a coincidence that a steep rise in password compromise coincided with global coverage of the University’s prowess in medical sciences can only be a matter of speculation: but the trend was already there beforehand.

In the face of a rapidly-rising number of threats, the scheme to update SSO and enable MFA needed to proceed with what is for Oxford lightning pace. It was conceived in Trinity Term and began to be implemented in Michaelmas. Such is the nature of security threats: if you do not act urgently when you see the threat increasing, you

risk being overwhelmed. Many of those wishing to steal University data are opportunistic and not subject to an annual planning cycle.

And yet, for all that we may joke about the speed of decision-making in the University, the MFA project did proceed with due oversight. As chair of the *Joint Information Security Advisory Group*, I played only the smallest part in this myself, but seeing a huge range of representative and governance committees move at pace in response to the urgency of the situation was quite thrilling (at least, as exciting as bureaucracy gets). Policy is one thing; implementation is quite another. Making this happen took similarly great effort from Information Security, IT Services, and IT staff around the University, and enabled a great many individuals to be well prepared.

Few new IT projects run entirely smoothly on the first day, and that proved to be the case with the introduction early in Michaelmas Term of MFA for a large group of Weblearn users. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, and as they say, lessons will surely be learned. At the time of writing, the use of MFA is becoming widespread in the University. It comes with some accompanying pain – but much of this will pass. The biggest lesson to learn, perhaps, is that we should have done this sooner, with greater leisure – but for structural, organisational, and yes, technical reasons, that would have been very difficult to pull off.

As adversaries continually adapt, improve, and become more devious, security technologies can never stand still. MFA will not be the last major security measure to be needed by the University. Hopefully others will be closer to being invisible. Colleagues in Computer Science are working on a spin-out company offering a far-reaching solution to the phishing problem.³ For now, I am frustrated by how often I have to enter an extra code when accessing University systems. However, that frustration is vastly outweighed by the knowledge that my SSO account – and with it, the privacy of my students, access to research data, and much else besides – is considerably better protected than it was a year ago.

¹ *Technical Reasons*, Finn Jarvis, *Oxford Magazine*, Eighth Week, Michaelmas Term 2020.

² Tricking someone into disclosing personal data such as a password, via a plausible but fake message.

³ www.phishar.com

The next issue of Oxford
Magazine will appear in
fifth week

Not another survey!

DOROTHY V.M. BISHOP

EVERY day brings new surveys: from vendors who want you to rate your customer experience, from organisations who want to know your views on current political issues, or from researchers seeking fresh data of some kind. All of these take up time, which is a precious commodity at the best of times, and even more so during a pandemic. It is therefore only after some soul-searching that Reproducible Research Oxford (RROx) decided to launch a new survey of scholars at the University of Oxford at the start of 2021. So who are we, and why are we doing this?

The origin of RROx was as a grass-roots movement that grew out of concerns of early-career researchers, who felt that there is a lack of alignment between scholarly excellence, and the things one needs to do to get grants, jobs and promotion. This has been documented in research at an international level: too often, researchers feel pressured to publish quickly in high-profile publications, cutting corners, and over-hyping their findings. In many areas of science specifically, there is at the same time a growing unease about lack of reproducibility of published findings. There have been some high-profile examples of outright fraud, with researchers manipulating or fabricating data in order to generate exciting and innovative results. In addition, a great deal of waste is documented, with massive publication bias distorting the knowledge base, because results often go unpublished unless they support the author's hypothesis.

These problems are not, however, confined to research in the biomedical sciences: similar problems have been documented in a number of disciplines in the social sciences, including economics, politics and archaeology. Meanwhile, in the humanities, there appears to be devaluation of the traditional scholar, doing painstaking, careful work cumulated over several years, in favour of those who can generate large amounts of grant income. More generally, there seems to be a move to evaluate humanities studies by criteria developed for science.

In 2019, RROx was formed with the help of a grant from the John Fell Fund, which covered the appointment of a coordinator, Dr Malika Ihle. RROx is an affiliation of scholars from all four divisions of the University, plus representatives from Gardens, Libraries and Museums and Research and IT Services, and it includes both senior and junior researchers. Our brief has been to help communications between different disciplines, to identify training needs, and to hold events to promote reproducible and open research. There is good alignment between these goals and the work of the UK Research Integrity Office, which works to ensure that universities adopt appropriate standards in training and research practice, so that research is trustworthy. We thus have a synergy between the goals of those at the most senior levels of the University, who quite simply want the University of Oxford to retain its reputation for excellence, and the most junior researchers, who want to be certain that by adopting high standards they will not be blighting their careers. That may sound like an extreme statement, but the commonest comment I get when running training courses on how to

do reproducible research is from early-career researchers who tell me they would like to follow the recommendations that I give, but it would be career suicide. This is a worrying situation, as it means that our brightest young people are either being coerced into adopting low standards, or else they leave the field. Of course, there are many counterexamples, but the evidence is that the incentive structures in academia have had a pernicious effect on research integrity, and no institution is immune.

RROx is probably unique among organisations focused on research integrity in its multidisciplinary scope. Our coordinator, Malika Ihle, has already made contacts across all divisions of the University and found that in some cases, there are impressive instances of good practice, but they are siloed within a particular department. Elsewhere, there is a strong demand for better training—sometimes without awareness that such training is offered elsewhere in the University.

This brings us to the survey. Our impression is that the cause of open, reproducible research at the University of Oxford could be best served by improving communications across disciplines. There appear to be too many instances of the wheel being reinvented by different departments or research groups, while other disciplines have no wheels at all. We need to find out more about what is available to help researchers improve research quality and what researchers feel is missing in their training or resources. We also need to find out about barriers that exist to the adoption of practices of open or reproducible research: do the costs outweigh the benefits in some disciplines, or does resistance reflect misunderstanding? It seems likely that, although we see benefits for taking a cross-disciplinary view, it will not be the case that all solutions are suitable for all kinds of scholarship, and we would like to find out more about the distinctive needs of particular fields.

This is why we are canvassing opinions from across the whole University, and I hope I will have persuaded you that this is not just another survey that will eat up your time pointlessly. We have strong support from Professor Patrick Grant, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and chair of the Research and Innovation Committee of the University, who recognises the importance of responding to the challenges that researchers are confronting, and is determined that the University will establish a scholarly culture that confirms our international reputation for excellence, rewarding those who do research to the highest standards. To achieve this, we need to know what Oxford researchers want, what is already available to help them in this enterprise, and what concerns they have about potential changes. It is important that we hear both from those who are enthusiastic about reform, and those who are more ambivalent, so please do contribute and let us have your views.

You can access the survey at: *Open research at Oxford*.^{*} This survey is aimed at academics, research staff and fellows, research support staff, and postgraduate research students, based in all academic Divisions of the University

and/or in the Colleges. As a 'thank you' for taking part, we will donate £1 to the University's Coronavirus Hardship Fund for each survey submitted (up to a total of £1,500), and you will have the option to enter a raffle for a chance to win one of five £50 gift cards from Blackwell's.

* https://zenodo.org/record/4437067#.YA6fuJCf_IU

Oxford's Environmental Sustainability Strategy – letting it roll?

PAULO BENTO MAFFEI DE SOUZA and BARBARA HARRISS-WHITE

THE Draft Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) published as a supplement to the *OU Gazette* on November 18th and offered by the University for public consultation until December 6th deserves the attention it has triggered, with over a thousand responses. On the one hand, it commits the University to pursuing bold goals (net zero carbon emissions by 2035, instead of the 50% reduction of the current strategy). It aims at seizing the day: as Lenin is reputed to have said "there are decades where nothing happens, and there are weeks where decades happen". It pledges frequent and transparent reviews. The presence of renowned experts in the Working Group and additional contributors, and its endorsement by both the Vice-Chancellor and the President of the Student Union, invite confidence and 'buy-in'. On the other, it adopts an approach which focuses on meeting a set of targets without dealing with implications for the subsystems which form part of its concept of the environment. Our critique focuses upon the integration of missing environmental subsystems, and on how the current focus of the Draft ESS could be pursued with minimal risks of unforeseen consequences. We argue that an application of a set of science-based sustainability principles derived from natural laws allows for progress on climate change and biodiversity while avoiding unintended effects and addressing environmental dimensions not yet incorporated in the Draft ESS.

Scope

While the draft strategy privileges climate and biodiversity, our ecological crisis is more complex. Rockström, Steffen and colleagues in papers in *Nature* (2009 and 2015) see seven more environmental subsystems that intertwine with both climate and biodiversity, and whose boundaries are also dangerous to cross. The reasons why the draft ESS does not address all nine subsystems—some of which have been trespassed by the UK¹—should be clarified.

Categories and activities which differ in their function and status (e.g. biodiversity, sustainable food, research, curriculum, teaching, emissions from buildings, etc.) are currently treated similarly by the ESS.

Differentiating (i) 'ends' (e.g. mitigation of climate change; biodiversity and freshwater conservation; pollution reduction, etc.) from (ii) 'means' (e.g. facilities man-

agement, heating, procurement, research, curriculum, etc.) would make tasks and purposes clearer for faculty and managers. But new institutions would need to be created with powers to resolve conflicts over resources, trade-offs and sequencing between departments and colleges

Sustainability: principles and mechanisms

A sustainability strategy, even one which, like the Draft ESS, focuses only on climate change and biodiversity, is a road map for navigating a specific complex system: society within the biosphere. Defining strategic goals that are robust, clear and can preserve the biosphere while providing for societal needs is key. One approach is to model this complex system, forecast future behaviour and set strategic goals accordingly. An alternative and complementary² approach is to "backcast"³ from visions framed by a principled definition of sustainability.⁴ As the Draft ESS is meant to provide long-term guidance, here we argue for the latter, because it provides clearer and more robust⁵ goals than the former.

Broman and Robert (2017),⁶ explain the principles that are needed. After decades of trans-disciplinary dialogue with fellow scholars they established three environmental sustainability principles⁷ grounded in universally accepted science:⁸

"In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically⁹ increasing

(1) concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust,

(2) concentrations of substances produced by society, and

(3) degradation by physical means."

These principles are **systemic** (establishing conditions for society and ecosystems to coexist healthily and indefinitely). Principle one is meant to prevent mined elements from accumulating systematically in the earth's ecosystems, altering their chemical composition and creating an environment that is poisonous to living organisms.¹⁰ The second principle follows a similar rationale for artificial substances. The third avoids nature's being degraded by

physical means, as opposed to by chemical means, as in the first two principles.

As well as being systemic, the principles are **necessary** for environmental sustainability (violating them degrades nature), **sufficient** (there are no unaddressed means of destroying the biosphere), **general** (they are applicable to any organisation and sector), **concrete** (to guide practical problem-solving), and **non-overlapping** (avoiding confusion) (Broman and Robèrt, 2017).

Importantly, they focus on negating destructive mechanisms, rather than on pursuing quantitative targets. There are four reasons for this: (1) mechanisms can guide action better¹¹ than quantitative boundaries, while (2) environmental boundaries are hard to quantify, (3) the subsystems they represent intertwine and change under mutual influences, and (4) pressure on boundaries cannot be attributed unequivocally to individual sectors or organisations such as, for instance, Oxford University. Enabling institutions to assume a share of the responsibility for violating a planetary boundary has not yet proved possible. By contrast, the mechanisms that push nature towards boundaries when interacting with unsustainable human systems are immutable. They operate irrespective of where such boundaries are estimated to lie. Organisations can plan to phase-out contributions to mechanisms of destruction regardless of size or sector, and unrelated to their historic relations to environmental boundaries.

Further, by considering all sustainability principles, an organisation can solve problems in one environmental domain without creating problems in another. Take the example of producing low carbon energy by boosting the productivity of bioenergy monoculture through the intensive use of agro-chemicals. An evaluation using sustainability principles would indicate consequences such as water pollution affecting food chains, and GHGs in agro-chemicals production. These impacts can be mitigated or avoided through measures to comply with sustainability principles, preventing a chain of negative ripple effects from happening. In this example, what could be done? Agro-chemicals could be reduced and eventually phased out by adjusting management practices that use biodiversity for controlling pests and enhancing soil fertility.

Armed with environmental sustainability principles, people implementing a sustainability strategy can identify the trade-offs they incur when choosing one route over other, and plan for corrections—in Oxford University's case, to prevent its prioritized goals being achieved at the expense of other biophysical subsystems.

What industry does not violate these principles? Indeed, to some extent, all do.¹² That does not mean they are all inherently unsustainable. The problem to be tackled is the reduction / elimination of their systematic impacts on the biosphere. Substituting material inputs, closing material cycles when using mined or artificial substances in order to protect nature from their effects, or implementing efficient reverse logistics to improve recycling can all help the economy to reduce its violation of these principles while providing the goods and services needed as societies develop towards full compliance.

This approach has been successfully adopted by a range of pioneering organisations since as far back as the 1990s, including Ikea, Scandic Hotels, Interface and various municipalities.

Electrolux—one of the early adopters, following the insistence of retailer ICA, also an early adopter—required all

product lines to present plans informed by careful life-cycle analyses based on sustainability principles. As a result, certain material inputs such as CFCs or HCFCs, toxic solvents, or PVC were reduced or phased out, hazardous waste was reduced, industrial processes started treating and recycling water, products became more energy efficient and incorporated more recycled materials, and the first CFC-free refrigerators came to market.

In the late 1990s, following criticisms about working conditions and environmentally damaging resource-use, Nike also adopted these sustainability principles. Their environmental strategy led to reductions in material inputs and toxicity. By the late 2000s, its directors decided to use the principles for innovation in design.¹³

Hydro Polymers (later INEOS) pioneered the use of these principles to identify and address sustainability issues in the PVC industry. This UK-led initiative eventually resulted in the principles being embedded in the entire European PVC value chain, which resulted in the current Vinylplus initiative.

Over 100 of Sweden's 290 municipalities have adopted these principles for strategic planning, reducing negative impacts and devising less-unsustainable processes. Through workshops with city council officers, civil society activists and politicians, problems are assessed, and rolling solutions are developed.

Evidently, all these organisations still have environmental problems to address. But reference to these environmental sustainability principles has ensured their movement away from unsustainable impacts and has helped address unintended consequences of actions taken earlier.

The structure of the strategy

To develop guidelines for implementation, the Working Group would have to scrutinize these environmental sustainability principles. Then, a vision of the University compliant with the principles would be developed with clarity for those working in three separate areas: teaching and research (core purposes) and administration (essential support). In all three areas, physical, intellectual and academic processes would be evaluated against the environmental sustainability principles. The ESS would then develop a gap analysis between current and desired processes, offering guidelines for departments and colleges in all three areas. In a collegiate structure such as Oxford University's, once a masterplan was defined each of the 67 departments and 39 colleges would then establish how their teaching, research and administration would shift towards compliance with the principles. As these principles are grounded in natural laws and scientifically established knowledge the ESS would remain valid over time and would act as a compass for the whole collegiate structure of the University on its journey towards sustainability.

Conclusion

The Draft ESS is an important step in the University's commitment to addressing the ecological crisis. Its response to climate change and biodiversity challenges shows its commitment. The approach we outline here is compatible

with and complementary to the Draft ESS. It could help develop the project further, placing the University among the vanguard of environmental responsibility, and making curriculum and research in colleges and departments generate ripple effects in the wider world.

¹ <https://goodlife.leeds.ac.uk/countries/#UnitedKingdom>

² Mathematical modelling of complex systems allows for the definition of goals that are useful in the short-term but lose precision over time. Complementary goals based on immutable sustainability principles allow for long-term guidance. While the former can be useful for tactical short-term steps, the latter ensures the strategy always points towards sustainability. Both can complement each other.

³ As opposed to forecast.

⁴ A definition of sustainability formed by fundamental principles that state conditions for society not to destroy the biosphere.

⁵ In the second approach, goals are not weakened by modelling uncertainties and, hence, are better suited for long-term guidance.

⁶ Broman, G.O. and Robèrt, K., 2017. A framework for strategic sustainable development. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 140, pp. 17-31

⁷ The authors also posit a principled approach to social sustainability, which is outside of the scope of our current comments to the Draft ESS.

⁸ Physics, chemistry, biology, and geology.

⁹ If pollution and degradation occurred only occasionally, the resilience of biophysical subsystems would usually be sufficient to absorb such disruptions. But when pollution and physical destruction recur systematically, resilience is eroded, pushing the earth system towards tipping points.

¹⁰ This is due to the fact that during billions of years of the planet's geological evolution, many substances became rarer in the biosphere due to sedimentation, allowing life to evolve without them. Hence, the systematic accumulation in nature of mined materials recreates a chemical scenario to which current living organisms are not always adapted.

¹¹ Why better? Sustainability principles as mechanisms for not destroying the biosphere are immutable, as opposed to ever shifting quantitative boundaries. Hence, they act as a steady compass for defining and periodically revising strategic goals, allowing for a constant and stepwise development towards a sustainability.

¹² The inevitable consequence of violating environmental sustainability principles is environmental degradation. Occasionally, degradation is foreseeable based on knowledge about past ecosystem dynamics and behaviour. However, (1) identifying all responses to disturbance in a complex system is impossible, and (2) often feedbacks in nature are long delayed. Hence, some environmental impacts of the violation of the principles, although sure to happen, are unforeseeable when the activities that cause them are initiated. Yet, environmental degradation, even when not foreseeable, can be avoided by complying with the principles.

¹³ <https://thenaturalstep.org/project/nike/#:~:text=Nike's%20North%20Star%20Innovation%20Goals&text=It%20is%20best%20described%20as,materials%20and%20sustainable%20product%20innovation>

Peer Review – the Gold Standard?

RICHARD CLOGG

THE world may have been turned upside down in the universities, as elsewhere, by the coronavirus pandemic, nonetheless the 2021 Research Excellence Framework exercise is to go ahead as planned. Meanwhile students are in a mutinous frame of mind as a result of being looked upon as cash cows to prop up the finances of the university sector and resent being forced to lead a monastic existence in student accommodation with access only to online teaching. In some universities, academic staff are clearly unhappy at pressure to offer the 'full campus experience' by offering face-to-face teaching. Some are worried not only about possible threats to their health but also to their jobs.

Whether it is wise for the Research Excellence Framework to proceed in the midst of a worsening coronavirus crisis, with the revised deadline for submissions being the end of March 2021, is questionable. Moreover, no 'robust' algorithm, of the kind that caused so much confusion about the GCSE and A-Level results last August, affords a substitute for peer review which some years ago the Wellcome Trust insisted 'remains a bedrock of the scholarly communications system'.¹

After the first REF exercise, Derek Sayer pointed out that, while there were eminent historians on the REF history panel, there were none with specialised knowledge of the languages, archives, and literatures of entire countries and regions. As a result, the 2014 REF exercise was often reliant on the judgement of a single assessor, who might

have known little of the subject matter.² A case in point is the allocation of the modern history of Greece, my own field, to Classics against the protests of specialists in the field. For a book on, for example, the Greek Resistance during the Second World War to be assessed by a group of classicists, however distinguished, would be a manifest nonsense. If modern Greek studies are to be subsumed with Classics, why not Italian studies? Italians no less than Greeks are heirs to a great civilization in antiquity.

A good example of the unwisdom of relying on the judgement of a single individual, however eminent, on a given work is afforded by one of the most renowned of Oxford historians during the second half of the twentieth century, Hugh Trevor-Roper. Richard Davenport-Hines has written that Trevor-Roper insisted on 'exacting standards of historical evidence' and was 'a combative man whose razor-edged intelligence caused wounds that in some cases never healed'.³ He was known for his trenchant reviews of works of which he disapproved. Perhaps the most wounding of these was *Arnold Toynbee's Millennium*, his critique of Toynbee's multi-volume *A Study of History*.⁴ Trevor-Roper deemed Toynbee's *magnum opus* to be not merely erroneous but 'a monstrous piece of humbug.' He took a second swipe at Toynbee some thirty years after the *Encounter* article and almost fifteen years after Toynbee had died. This took the form of a six-page review of William McNeill's biography of Toynbee in the *New York Review of Books*.⁵ Trevor-Roper concluded

this philippic by writing that, while he had no regrets about having exposed 'the pretentious obscurantism' of Toynbee, he might have been 'a little gentler' had he known that Toynbee's father for his last thirty years had been mad.

Trevor-Roper's tendency to smite hip and thigh academics whose work he found not to measure up to his demanding standards invites examination of the work of an historian for whom he seems to have had an unqualified admiration, the Byzantinist Steven Runciman. The praise that Trevor-Roper had heaped on Runciman's three volume *A History of the Crusades* was repeated in a review of *The Great Church in Captivity. A study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from the Eve of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence* (1968), published, like the crusading history, by Cambridge University Press.

In *The Sunday Times*, Trevor-Roper described the book, 'as we should expect' as 'a model of wide learning and perfect scholarship, lightly carried and elegantly expressed ... a wonderful work of scholarship, sensitivity and style.'⁶ Other scholars hailed it as 'a superb performance'; 'a classic study'; 'one of Runciman's best books'; and as a 'unique contribution to western understanding of the Byzantine Orthodox Church' for which scholars should be 'immensely grateful'. These were the judgements of distinguished scholars, although, like Trevor-Roper, none had specialised knowledge of Runciman's chosen subject.

Trevor-Roper's encomium was of particular of interest to me as at the time it was published I was working on aspects of the history of the (Greek) Orthodox Church under Ottoman rule. I was puzzled by what Trevor-Roper understood by a work of 'perfect scholarship.' Presumably this meant, *inter alia*, that it was free of error, that it covered all aspects of the subject and that it was based on a mastery of the relevant literature.

This was not the case, as I pointed out in a review article in *Middle Eastern Studies*.⁷ *The Great Church in Captivity* is a pioneering work, which opened up a field of knowledge which had at the time been little studied in the English-speaking world. It was, however, not without error and was selective in its coverage. While it has merits, it could not be called a work of 'perfect scholarship'.

Runciman's book had its origins in an unsatisfactory attempt to meld two disparate sets of published lectures, the Gifford Lectures on *The Great Church in Captivity* (1960-61) and the Birkbeck Lectures on *The Church in Constantinople and the Protestant Churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (1966). As a consequence, two fifths of the book was devoted to the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the centuries *before* the Ottoman conquest. A further fifth of the book discussed the relations of the Patriarchate with the Church of Rome, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Church of England and the Russian Orthodox Church, admittedly subjects of interest but not central to a study of the Ecumenical Patriarchate under Ottoman rule.

The fate of Orthodoxy during the *Tourkokratia*, the centuries of Ottoman rule between 1453 and 1821, was covered in the remaining two fifths. This section is marred by a serious error which undermined Runciman's underlying thesis that it was the Orthodox Church which enabled Hellenism to survive the 'captivity' of Ottoman rule. In describing the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821, the two hundredth anniversary of

which is being celebrated this year, Runciman spoke of the silence of the Holy Synod when the news of the insurgency reached the Ottoman capital. He wrote of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Gregorios V, who was hung in reprisal for the disloyalty of members of his flock at the entrance to the Patriarchate (a gate that has remained closed to this day), that had he been able to bring himself to denounce the revolt he might have saved his life. But Gregorios and the Holy Synod did condemn the insurgency in the strongest terms. The insurgents were publicly castigated as 'villains and evil-doers' and 'desperate fugitives' to be cursed for all eternity. Those who attacked the 'generous, solicitous, powerful and invincible' Ottoman Empire had manifestly rebelled 'against God's command.'

Attitudes such as this, together with the Orthodox hierarchy's hostility to the growing interest, amounting at times almost to an obsession, in the decades before 1821 among educated Greeks in their classical heritage, which the hierarchy equated with paganism, contributed to the emergence of a powerful current of anti-clericalism which is barely touched upon. No mention is made of the fact that many Orthodox Christians in Asia Minor, and in Constantinople itself, were monoglot Turkish speakers. For the literate of these a whole literature in Turkish printed in Greek characters was published from the middle of the 18th century onwards. Likewise, there is nothing about the Orthodox crypto-Christians who outwardly conformed to Islam but secretly maintained their ancestral faith, openly bearing a Muslim name but secretly retaining a Christian baptismal name and marrying only fellow crypto-Christians.

Runciman perpetuated the myth that Russia, by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (1774), acquired a right of intervention on behalf of the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire, when such a right existed only in respect of a single Russian church in the Ottoman capital. It is anachronistic to talk of Greek 'industrialists' settling in Alexandria during the centuries of the *Tourkokratia*. Runciman wrote that, as late as the 1780s, a Greek boy adopted by a Muslim family was hanged in Ioannina for reverting to Christianity. But for another fifty years there were cases of Christian converts to Islam being executed after returning to their ancestral faith. These were known as 'neo-martyrs'. Only in 1844 did the Sublime Porte, under British pressure, put an end to the practice.

In writing of the extraordinary effort of the Reverend Benjamin Woodroffe to establish a Greek College at Oxford at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, Runciman described a tract by Frangiskos Prossalentis, one of the Greek students at the College who found the regime harsh and the food and climate of Oxford objectionable, as 'a friendly little book describing Dr Woodroffe's quirks and foibles.' As its translated title suggests, *The Heretical Teacher censured by the Orthodox Pupil* (Amsterdam 1706) is anything but a 'friendly little book'. It is a spirited attack on Woodroffe as a true disciple of Calvin and his 'bogus college'. Runciman does not seem to have read it. His extensive bibliography makes no mention of E.D.Tappe's seminal article on the Greek College in *Oxoniensia*.⁸ Greek sources listed are relatively few, while only a single Turkish one is listed, a general history of the Ottoman Empire.

What if a work akin to Steven Runciman's *The Great Church in Captivity* on an important but recondite subject, on which expertise in this country is lacking, were to

be considered in the REF 2021 after it been publicly declared by one of our most distinguished historians, albeit without specialised knowledge of its subject matter, to be a work of ‘perfect scholarship’. What if it were to be enthusiastically reviewed by a raft of distinguished historians whose expertise likewise lay in other fields? Then it could be expected that the expert assessors of the Classics Unit of Assessment, distinguished scholars all, but again with limited expertise in the post-classical history of Greece, would be likely to award the work an unwarranted four star rating as ‘world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.’ The Wellcome Trust is right to insist that peer review is ‘a bedrock of the scholarly communications system’. But the bedrock can sometimes prove to be fissiparous.

¹ *The Metric Tide: Report of the Independent Review of the Role of Metrics in Research Assessment and Management* (July 2015) 65.

² ‘Problems with Peer Review for the REF’, posted on Council for the Defence of British Universities website 21 November 2014.

³ Hugh Trevor-Roper, Baron Dacre of Glanton, *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁴ *Encounter* (June 1957).

⁵ 12 October 1989.

⁶ 29 December 1968.

⁷ viii (1972) 247-257.

⁸ xix (1954) 92-111.

Diptych

Helen

Out of a cold egg hanging
In a Spartan temple
Hatched flaming violence,
Later stilled in marble.

Paris

Meant to send you a picture
Of the guy cutting my bike lock
But a spark hit my eye
And I forgot in my agony.

The Psychoanalyst

They overheard the knowledge held
By star herb stone or gem
Intuited the virtue
Of a sublunary flame

This space is an alembic
Of a different kind
Two armchairs set like mirrors
With alchemy in mind

TARA LEE

Tara Lee is a DPhil candidate at Corpus Christi College. Finding intersections between poetry and the eighteenth-century life sciences, her thesis considers the way in which William Blake resists the concept of autopoiesis. She was winner of the 2021 Jon Stallworthy Prize, 2020 Lord Alfred Douglas Prize, and the 2018 Keat-Shelley Essay Prize.

Meter Maid

My first husband broke my heart, so I broke his—
with a meat skewer. My second? He had
a roving eye, so I gouged it out with this
silver teaspoon. My third was one of those mad,
unnatural, repellent, stinking
beasts: a poet. So I ripped out his teeth
with pliers and removed his tongue with pinking
shears. As he lay bleeding I heard him breathe
in trochees so forced his head into
a plastic bag, and while doing that I
felt his heart beating in dactyls, knew
the clock was ticking in spondees, my
kettle huffing and puffing in pyrrhics
and the whole house humming, singing his damned lyrics.

Dreamtime

The forest draws in about five o'clock.
It gets dark, then your brain opens up:
you see figures lit by flames by that rock,
men, women, children in a circle, holed up
here forever, chanting, praying, in words
unknown outside our worst nightmares—
words that bespeak the end of the world,
the tribe, its myths and hopes and affairs.
I've been here too long. I settled here wanting
to eat the wilds of northern Virginia
but they've eaten me, and now I'm passing
into my own dreamtime: tomorrow in the
ground by these tribal graves I'll dig deep,
dig deep, find some new place to sleep.

DUNCAN WU

Duncan Wu is a former Fellow of St Catherine's College and is now Raymond A. Wagner Professor of Literary Studies at Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

What to do about the Vice-Chancellorship?

PETER OPPENHEIMER

It is now five years since Louise Richardson assumed office as Oxford's Vice-Chancellor. High time therefore to be thinking about who or what might succeed her. The opportunity should be taken, indeed, to consider the office from a broader perspective. Professor Richardson is the third incumbent to be appointed since the University inflicted upon itself the governance structure outlined in the North Commission's Report of 1998, her predecessors being John Hood (2004-9) and Andrew Hamilton (2010-15). The experience is sufficient for some general lessons to be drawn. These concern not only the nature of the Vice-Chancellorship itself, but also the possible scope for pragmatic, step-by-step amelioration of the University's governance machinery as a whole, without necessitating major changes of statute.

The feature shared by the three post-North appointees is that they began as outsiders and remained outsiders. Andrew Hamilton tried seriously to overcome this weakness—by seeking to make his Vice-Chancellorship something less than a sole occupation, and continuing to pursue his academic profession of biological chemistry. Elsewhere this might have been sufficient. In particular respects, after all, one university is much like another. Oxford differs, however, by virtue of its extraordinary historical evolution and structural complexity, including an ingrained tradition of decentralised, bottom-up governance. Alien to such an institution are not merely or even mainly the individuals who happen to be under discussion, but rather the post itself—chief-executive or prime-ministerial in style—to which they were named. To this crucial point I return below.

Each in their turn has resorted to various forms of communication to all members of the academic community. Wider-ranging documents have taken the customary form of Supplements to the *University Gazette*. These include quinquennial Corporate or Strategic Plans and, under John Hood, first a Green Paper in February 2005 entitled *Oxford's Academic Strategy*, and then in May 2006 a White Paper on University Governance. No matter what the scale or technology, however, internal communication has proved unpersuasive. Limited vocabulary has not helped. Recipients addressed up-front as “colleague” cannot but raise a cynical eyebrow when the term reappears a few paragraphs later referring merely to the politburo of Wellington Square. The main problem, however, has been the politburo itself, shaped by the North reforms, and using its communication strategy essentially to secure compliance, not to solicit opinions nor to involve the academic grass roots in University policy-making.

In this connection many will by now have forgotten, or be unaware of, the assorted notions deployed by John Hood and his supporters to establish what would have been a regime of hair-raising authoritarianism. The most obvious items involved personnel management. The abovementioned *Academic Strategy* document envisaged “a mandatory system of regular, joint University-College review of individual contributions, with scope to enhance financial rewards, re-balance academic duties, and ad-

dress under-performance.” Unauthorised attempts to implement such a system were brought to light in May 2005 through publication in *Oxford Magazine* of letters received by staff in the Medical Sciences Division. Congregation, duly alerted, voted to prevent it.

Other tactics painted a misleading picture of the University's finances, hinting at austerity to come. Limits on public funding of the collegiate University were highlighted; the growing prominence of private sources was left unmentioned—all this, one must emphasise, a good five years before the decisive shift to undergraduate fees following the Browne Report of 2010. A Corporate Plan published by the University in September 2005 cited the Government's so-called Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC)—an accounting fad of the time—to show that in “*the year 2002-3 (the last for which data are available) there was a deficit on publicly funded teaching at Oxford of £27.8m, not counting the shortfall in the colleges, and a deficit on publicly funded research of £67.7m*”. As I pointed out at the time, the so-called ‘deficits’ on publicly funded teaching and research were simply an indicator of the University's capacity to obtain funds elsewhere. For in the absence of such other sources, no deficits of the kind alleged could have come into existence. “The activities of teaching and research would simply have had to be shrunk, reduced in quality or closed down altogether. The University, in short, does not have a deficit on its publicly funded activities. What it has is a public deficit on its funded activities.” [“Let's Not be Financially Hoodwinked”, *Oxford Magazine*, No. 243, 2nd Week, Michaelmas Term 2005]

Vice-Chancellor Hood's successors have both tried to be less confrontational in style. This misses the crucial point stated earlier. The problem is not the manners of the incumbent, but the specification of the Vice-Chancellor's post, at the apex of a top-down governance structure utterly unsuited to the institution. Confrontation therefore gives way not to harmonious and comprehensively based decisions, but to concealment and to policy-making through *faits accomplis*—as with the creation of Parks/Reuben College in 2018-19; with the abrupt re-shaping of the central administration in 2012 and massive subsequent enlargement of what has since been called IT Services; and with academically ill-justified projects on the Radcliffe Observatory site. Sometimes critical decisions are shifted down onto the next layer of officialdom. This spreads the poison and takes heat off the V-C themselves. Thus, the HR directorate was granted open season to spend University money on fighting applications by individual academics for exemption from the standard Oxford retirement age (EJRA). Another variety of concealment is refusal by Wellington Square to supply information reasonably requested—such as anonymized salary details, including recruitment premia and merit awards, of higher-paid University staff both academic and administrative.

How then can the simple prospect of a vice-cancellarial succession be used to break logjams and point the way to

restoring what Louise Richardson wistfully refers to as “One Oxford”? The answer is: by fragmenting the post of Vice-Chancellor into a minimum of two, but preferably three or four equal-status positions, making it immediately clear that these are not chief executives but facilitators, non-executive chairs, and occasional public voices of the institution.

For the most part the holders would function alternately, by terms or quarters. On some issues they might wish, or be asked, to deliberate collectively. In any case these would be part-time positions, filled in all but exceptional cases from among current staff members of the University, and financed as necessary through partial buy-outs of the holders’ long-term college and/or University jobs. They would be appointed from different parts of the University in rotation – by representative bodies (such as groups of faculty boards), not by self-promotion and balloting.

A preliminary version of this proposal was outlined at a late stage of Andrew Hamilton’s tenure [see my “To the V-CNOMCom, among Others”, *Oxford Magazine*, No.354, Eighth Week, Michaelmas Term 2014]. Since that date the case has been considerably strengthened by increased emphasis on the social as opposed to academic role of leading universities – greater access for disadvantaged members of society, more elastic examination procedures and standards, and priority for ethnic diversity in response to the “Black Lives Matter” movement. The University’s sensitivity to these issues would be imaginatively signalled by a parallel change in the nature of its Vice-Chancellorship – which, however, would in effect also restore the office to what it had been throughout Oxford’s history, until 20 years ago! Late-mediaeval historians and others might favour us with some research on the role of Oxford’s Vice-Chancellors in the fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries, when, as a matter of fact, the office was not infrequently occupied by two or three persons in the space of a year.

To-day, the single change advocated here would as an immediate corollary transform the duties confronting certain members of the Wellington Square hierarchy, Heads of Division in particular. As matters stand, each Division acts as a narrow channel of vertical communication, between defined academic interests on one side and higher authority on the other. Recasting the post of Vice-Chancellor would in effect abolish the higher authority, and make key decisions of University policy dependent on direct discussions across the Divisional splits. One may keep an open mind on what further changes might in due course be indicated. One is the gradual disappearance of so-called Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellors. Another is the transfer of some personnel functions from central administration to committees of peer-academics.

In the meantime one should not underestimate the assistance which the academic community at large can

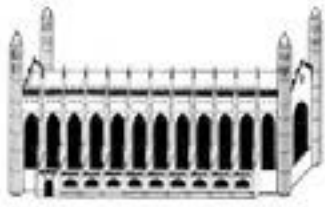
render to any Vice-Chancellor, whether new-style or old. For instance, in ensuring the quality and consistency of public statements on behalf of the University. Recent announcements have been maladroit and no credit to Oxford’s handling of complex issues. To cite examples, on 19th January 2021 the University welcomed a donation of £100 million from Sir Jim Ratcliffe’s company INEOS, to establish an Institute of Antimicrobial Resistance. INEOS is, of course, a multi-product, multi-national enterprise, concerned with many excellent promotions of health, sport and the environment. It just so happens that its basic business, barely a generation ago, was manufacture of petrochemicals. It would have behoved Oxford to explain, ever so briefly, as of course it easily could have done, why and how its acceptance of this donation is consistent with its self-righteous proclamation only weeks earlier of comprehensive disinvestment from fossil fuels.

Equally infelicitous in a different way was Oxford’s claim to have forbidden so-called ‘profiteering’ by Astra-Zeneca on supplies of the Oxford Covid vaccine. In this instance Oxford’s much vaunted commitment to “inter”- or “cross-disciplinary” thinking was painfully absent. Relevant disciplines that should have been consulted include, as a minimum, ethics, economics and business studies. For a start, supply of the vaccine “at cost” does not mean at zero profit. The definition of “cost” includes a normal margin of profit on capital. Moreover a “normal” margin in the pharmaceutical industry is hard to define, because successful products need to compensate for failures, i.e. for the large sums expended fruitlessly on the search for new treatments in the face of uncertainty. As it turns out, the Oxford vaccine, while by no means a monopoly product, is considerably cheaper than its rivals to produce and distribute; a very modest addition to its selling price therefore makes a considerable difference to its profitability. Oxford itself, as a major recipient of funding from the pharmaceutical industry, is hardly in a position to object. And in any case, the University habitually boasts about the number and success of its own commercial spin-offs, so clearly has no general objection to industrial prowess.

In conclusion, I repeat that the suggestion to re-model the position of Vice-Chancellor is far less radical than may appear at first sight. To be sure, it is influenced by the special combination of pressures facing the University at the present moment. But it is also designed to undo an obvious blunder of recent making, and to reinvigorate the patterns of individual initiative and bottom-up governance that have caused “One Oxford” to develop and flourish over so many centuries. To borrow a slogan from the United States, and saluting its new President: *E pluribus unum*.

NOTICE

Jane Griffiths, literary editor of the *Oxford Magazine*, will be pleased to read literary submissions of any description – e.g. verse, critical prose, very short stories, segments of dialogue, reviews of new dramatic productions and books, etc. Submissions should be no longer than 750 words, and where possible should be sent by email attachment to jane.griffiths@ell.ox.ac.uk together with a two-sentence bio.



Notes from Cambridge

A General Notice in the *Gazette* of Noughth Week announced under ‘*Gazette* Publication Arrangements’ that it had been ‘decided by the General Purposes Committee and by Council’ that a hundred and fifty years of the print record is to end, except for a ‘limited’ print run for ‘libraries, archives and paid subscribers’. ‘Arrangements’ about this ‘will be announced once libraries are open again’. No reason was given.

Surely this raises a number of questions? The first must be whether this should simply have been announced as a Council decision. Although Oxford’s Statutes and Regulations contain many specific requirements for publication in the *Gazette* there is nothing in the University’s domestic law governing the publication of the *Gazette* itself. Surely there should be? The counterpart Cambridge *Reporter* has its own Ordinance and a change of Ordinance¹ must be approved by a Grace of the Regent House. The Ordinance makes the Registry Editor of the *Reporter*, part of the duties of that office to keep the University’s historical record. Council Regulations (1) of 2002 (24), merely makes Oxford’s Registrar ‘responsible for University publications’.

When Cambridge decided to make the *Reporter* an online-only publication there had to be extended consultation before the eventual consent of the University’s governing body could be sought. The proposed justification was saving money. The discussion in Cambridge began with a *Report* of the Council on the future of the *Reporter* and other publications in March 2011,² following a *Reporter* Notice of July 2010 about the need to ‘consider University-wide efficiency savings’.

A Discussion followed the *Report* in the usual way and the Council published a *Notice* in response to the ‘remarks’ made.³ Print-on demand was not a possibility, it said, because the *Reporter* would no longer be printed by the CUP. Data protection concerns arising from the publication of class-lists etc, would have to be thought through. The Council would ‘report back to the University in due course’ on that.

The recommendations in the *Report* of March 2011 as amended by this *Notice* were put in a Grace approving that:

‘with effect from 1 October 2011, the Cambridge University Reporter ceases as a paper publication and that it be made available as a digital publication only.’

Subject to that approval the Ordinance was amended:

‘by rescinding Regulations 3–6 and by amending Regulation 2 by adding the following second sentence:

Publication in the Reporter shall include publication on a University website.’

There was no opposition or amendment so the change went through without a ballot.⁴

Digital-only *Reporter* publication has worked quite well in Cambridge, with the support of an email list notifying those who subscribe to it of the publication of a new issue, much as is provided for the *Gazette*. There is for the *Reporter* a downloadable pdf version and (in normal times an html version too).

* * *

There are, however, differences in the roles of *Gazette* and *Reporter* beyond keeping the record straight with respect especially to the legislative *Agenda* and *Acta* of their sovereign bodies and their Councils’ subordinate roles in creating domestic legislation. Those differences ought to be at the forefront of making a decision to take the record permanently online. While the *Reporter* offers a succession of opportunities for members of the Regent House to notice what is proposed for their approval and to contribute to the amendment and improvement of what they first hear of only as ‘recommendations’, the *Gazette* can normally offer only one such opportunity—though that may be repeated in more than one issue of the *Gazette* where it involves a fixed date for a notice of opposition to be sent to the Registrar.

A notable example was the rush to get the necessary Congregation consent to the creation of what was then called Parks College as a new Society of the University. The *Gazette* of 21 March 2019 included lengthy replies to Congregation Questions on the subject, to be read at a meeting of Congregation with opportunity for Supplementary Questions to be put; a legislative proposal for the necessary change to Statute V; voting on more Resolutions about the allocation of space, necessary under Statute XVI, A, 4, all to be galloped through at a single meeting of Congregation on May 7. Notice of opposition had to be with the Registrar by noon on 29 April, on the other side of the Vacation. This was a very long read and surely one much more likely to be noticed and read through in a paper copy picked up in a Common Room or found in one’s pigeon-hole than conscientiously checked online on a busy Thursday morning?

This surely makes the *Gazette*’s continuing availability in print as well as online all the more important and not least because of the essentially ‘once-and-for-all’ structure of the opportunity for Congregation to notice, understand and engage with what it would be deemed to have approved, by default, if it did not do so.

Moreover, the decision-making preliminaries for making Oxford Regulations are far more minimal than those for making of a Cambridge Ordinance. Oxford’s Council actually creates legislation at Regulation level which comes into force ‘from the fifteenth day after the date of the publication of the descriptive notice in the *University Gazette*’:

'unless notice of a resolution calling upon Council to annul or amend the regulation is received by the Registrar by noon on the eleventh day after the day on which the descriptive notice was published (Statute VI, 19).'

Only then must Congregation approve the Regulation.

Thus Congregation may intervene and take control of the legislating, but it can do so only if members of Congregation happen to have read the relevant issue of the *Gazette* in order that members might potentially initiate the process. By contrast Cambridge's Council does not create Ordinances. It can only publish a recommendation for a change, to Statute or Ordinance alike, in a *Report*, beginning by custom, 'The Council begs leave to report to the University as follows'. The *Report* and its 'Recommendations' are then put up for Discussion at the next available Discussion date, and the remarks made published *verbatim* in the *Reporter*, normally in the following week. The Council may choose to publish a *Notice* in response, also in the *Reporter*. The actual legislation of an Ordinance, like a Statute, happens by Grace of the Regent House. The Grace is published in the *Reporter* giving ten days for the collection and submission of signatures calling a Non Placet or proposing an Amendment. That leads in due course (a few times a year) to a postal ballot, whose date and result are also published in the *Reporter*.

So the *Reporter* maps in far more detail than the *Gazette* the process of creation of the subordinate legislation which makes up in both universities the 'detail' of domestic legislation which is far more extensive than the Statutes.

* * *

However, the problem that a digital record is less secure in the long-term continues in both universities' attempts to maintain their historical archives. Among the concerns raised during the consultation in Cambridge had been the risk to the security of that record. Putting archive copies in the University Library might help, it was suggested, but online publication presented its own challenges. The Council noted that:

'Recent practice, where it has been necessary to amend an entry in Reporter, and it has been deemed sufficiently important to amend and highlight the change on the original web page, has been to insert a note on the web page drawing attention to the revised Notice.'

The great test of the *Reporter* as a record came in early 2020 when Cambridge governance was abruptly suspended at the March meetings of the Council and General Board, publication of the *Reporter* was suspended and Discussions stopped. That was explained in an issue of the *Reporter* on 16 April. No more *Reporters* appeared until 27 May, followed by two on 17 and 24 June, another on 29 July and an extra on 11 August. Normal publication did not begin again until September 28th. At the Discussion on a Topic of Concern offered by the Council for 14 July the Chair of the Board of Scrutiny⁵ spoke to describe the Board's intervention prompting the ensuing issues:

'The Board wrote to the Council's Business Committee on 23 May to raise its concerns with respect to the suspension of the

*publication of the Reporter and the concomitant implications for governance. The Board was concerned that whilst there had been numerous communications from the Vice-Chancellor to staff and students, there had been no account in the form of a Notice to inform the Regent House of the pertinent decisions that have been made under delegated authority and no attempt, by the publication of Graces, to obtain any retrospective authority for those decisions. The Board noted that if the Council believed that no such Graces were needed, then Council should specify by what authority the various actions have been taken. The Board further noted its concern that the longer the suspension of the Reporter lasted, the greater was the risk of challenge either to the process or individual decisions taken without the necessary authority.'*⁶

The Council's *Notice* in response is still awaited.

The *Gazette* already faces similar difficulties to those of the *Reporter* in preserving the historical record even in its printed issues. Decisions have to be taken about what is to go into the text in full without any rule in Statute or Regulations determining what exactly must be 'in' the *Gazette*. The Ordinance governing the *Reporter* is clear about that. Yet determining what may be joined to the *Gazette* by URL is historically risky. URL links do not prove reliable in the long term, certainly not for the next 150-year run of the *Gazette*.

* * *

It is not as if the content of the *Gazette* has been wholly fixed throughout its history. The first issues were not quite like the modern ones in that respect, and some flexibility has continued. The Editorial of the *Oxford Magazine*, Noughth Week, Michaelmas Term (2000) discussed a recent change in the format of the *Gazette*, restoring it to the 'look' of a decade earlier, by removing the 'news pages' from the beginning. 'The news pages have not themselves been abolished,' wrote the then Editor, Jim Reed. They had merely been 'hived off to become the separate bulletin *Blueprint*'. The 'news' would now 'come at you in bigger bundles four times a term', much like the *Magazine*. This new publication, set beside *Oxford Today* and *Oxford*, would not result in a 'communicative excess', he suggested, because these organs were intended for different readerships. *Blueprint* would see a 'broadening of catchment area' and appeal to 'an audience' not necessarily drawn to the *Gazette*. But could *Blueprint* become 'an organ carrying the voice of authority' he asked? How would its content relate to that of the *Gazette* as the University's organ of historical record since 1870?

Blueprint survives as a publication of the Public Affairs Directorate with a new 'monthly e-newsletter' to 'supplement it', the *Blueprint Bulletin*. This has become a vehicle of internal 'comms' along with a variety of 'senior' blogs and messages circulated during the year since the governance of the University has been largely in the hands of *de facto* 'executive' Silver and Bronze groups. It is of course 'history' in its own right, but it cannot be history in the way the *Gazette* chronicles the University's *life*. It belongs with the practice mentioned in Cambridge by the Chair of the Board of Scrutiny, the 'numerous communications from the Vice-Chancellor to staff and students'.

How prompt and consistent will the lodging of the promised archive copies be in practice? Is it intended to provide a printed copy only in Duke Humfrey's Library as at present? There binding can lag far behind the

appearance of issues, leaving the ‘archive’ copies to take their chances loose in a grey cardboard box. Is there a risk to the ending of printing of the *Oxford Magazine* too? That has its archive copies in Duke Humfrey alongside the *Gazette*, the copies of recent decades still loose and unbound in their grey cardboard boxes.

G.R.EVANS

¹ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/pdfs/2020/nov2020/ordinance01.pdf>

‘1. The Cambridge University Reporter shall contain (a) in its official part, University Notices issued by authority; (b) in its unofficial part, reports of Discussions held under Special Ordinance A (ii) 2; notices of non placet of Graces, without comment (other than references to the Reports discussed), signed by persons entitled to vote; notices, not authorized for inclusion in the official part, of lectures and other instruction; notices sent by Colleges; notices and reports of learned societies connected with the University; and such advertisements as the Registry may think fit to insert. 2. Numbers of the Reporter shall be published at the discretion of the Registry. Publication in the Reporter shall include publication on the Reporter website (<https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/>). This publication shall include from time to time, and at least weekly during term, a consolidated issue of all new Notices, Reports, Graces, and other

items which have appeared on the website. If publication in the Reporter of a Report, Grace, Notice, or other matter as required by any Statute or Ordinance is not possible for a period or by a specified date, it shall be sufficient publication for the purpose of the Statute or Ordinance if the Registry causes it to be posted outside the Senate-House and a copy of it to be sent to the Head of each College and Approved Society, the Chair of each Faculty, the Head of each Department, and the Director or corresponding officer responsible for every other institution of the University, with a request for its publication within the institution; in such circumstances the Report, Grace, Notice, or other matter shall be published also in the Reporter as soon as it becomes possible.’

² <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6217/section8.shtml#heading2-19>.

³ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6224/section1.shtml#heading2-9>.

⁴ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2010-11/weekly/6227/section10.shtml#heading2-22>.

⁵ Elected by the Regent House and including the Proctors.

⁶ <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2019-20/weekly/6587/section7.shtml#heading2-35>

Let’s twist again, like the way we did last summer – revisiting Kenneth Clark’s thoughts on the motive

BERNARD RICHARDS

’Tis sixty years since, to use Walter Scott’s phrase. It’s Hilary Term 1961. I am in a crowded Playhouse theatre in Oxford listening to Kenneth Clark giving one of his Slade lectures. He is exploring the concept of ‘the motive’, and bringing it into focus with the help of Cézanne’s paintings and Cézanne’s comments on his practice. In his biography of Clark (2016) James Stourton says that the undergraduates were ‘baffled’, but I for one could see what he was driving at, and have been thinking about the subject ever since. Clark had been thinking about it since the 1920s, and kept coming back to the project to write something lengthy and definitive on the subject, but he never did. He explained in his lecture that ‘the motive’ was not exactly the same as ‘le motif’, since ‘le motif’ was more like a design, something like an emblem or trade-mark, say, whereas ‘the motive’ was a subject appealing to an artist and already containing within itself suggestions on how the treatment was to be achieved, and an inherent appeal. The artist would recognise a motive, by way of a species of preparedness. The text of the lectures survives in the Tate archive.

A key lecture was ‘The Ecstatic Spiral’, following the appeal of the curling shape in art: ‘We twist in agony, we twist in ecstasy, we twirl in the dance. A leaf in an eddy of wind rises in a spiral, so does a waterspout. Flames curl upwards, to comfort or destroy, as matter is transformed into energy.’ He identifies the motive as an element in art ‘where the fusion of form and subject . . . has taken a recognizable shape, either because it recurs with unquestionable power over a long period, or because, over a short period, it is used with compulsive intensity.’ Clark ends this last lecture by observing that the phenomenon ‘now

can find expression only in music and dancing. Although our buildings are as rigid as gridirons, we still find release and emotional satisfaction in the Twist.’ One should recall that the Twist was the latest fashionable dance; it was No. 1 in the hit parade in Chubby Checker’s version in September 1960. I ought to remember polite titters from the audience, but I don’t. Professors sometimes feel the need to seem ‘with it’.

It is not at first glance easy to deal with the concept of the motive as Clark envisaged it, because the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not recognise this particular meaning. The word Cézanne employs is ‘motif’ – but he is obviously bending it and supplementing it with more resonance than the dictionary definition of the word presents, or the word ‘motif’ as it is generally understood. I am replacing the word ‘motifs’ in the following quotations with ‘motive’, which is what Kenneth Clark would have done were he writing this essay, and certainly he did it in his lectures. What is striking about Cézanne’s use of the word ‘motive’ is that it nearly always applies to landscape, whereas in the nineteenth century it was more commonly applied to human poses. A great resource for the scholar is Richard Kendall’s *Cézanne By Himself* (1988). First from his letters:

(from *L’Estaque*) ‘I have started two little motives with the sea for Monsieur Chocquet, who has spoken to me about them. – It’s like a playing-card. Red roofs over the blue sea. If the weather becomes favourable I may perhaps carry them through to the end. Up to now I have done nothing. – But there are motives which would need three or four months’ work, which would be possible, as the vegetation doesn’t change here. The olives and pine tree always keep their leaves. The sun here is so tremendous that

it seems to me as if the objects were silhouetted not only in black and white, but in blue, red, brown and violet. I may be mistaken, but this seem to me to be the opposite of modelling. (Letter to Camille Pissarro, 2 July 1876).

Cézanne went on a holiday to Talloires in Switzerland, staying at the Hotel de l'Abbaye. What he found was a distressingly motiveless scene: 'When I was in Aix, it seemed to me that I'd be better off somewhere else; now that I'm here, I miss Aix. For me life takes on a sepulchral monotony.' (16 July 1896) Another letter expresses his discontent: 'The height of the surrounding mountains is quite considerable, the lake [Annecy] which is here narrowed by two tongues of land seems to lend itself to the linear exercises of the young English miss. It is still nature of course, but a little bit as we have learned to see it in the travel sketchbooks of young ladies. (Letter to Joachim Gasquet, 21 July 1896).



Talloires. Le Port

Here he is back in his familiar Aix a decade later:

'Finally I must tell you that as a painter I am becoming more clear-sighted before nature, but that with me the realization of my sensations is always painful. I cannot attain the intensity that is unfolded before my senses. I have not the magnificent richness of colouring that animates nature. Here on the bank of the river the motives multiply, the same subject seen from a different angle offers subject for study of the most powerful interest and so varied that I think I could occupy myself for months without changing place, by turning now more to the right, now more to the left.' (Letter to his son Paul Cézanne, 8 September 1906).

Emile Gasquet recalls watching Cézanne at work not far from Les Milles, looking down the valley of the Arc, with a hint of the sea, Mont Ste-Victoire, the viaduct of the Pont de L'Arc:

'Cézanne: I have my motive... (he clasps his hands). That's what a motive is, you see...

Gasquet: What do you mean ?

Cézanne: Ah yes... (he makes the same gesture as before, separates his hands, all ten fingers spread, very slowly brings them together again, then joins, clasps, clenches, intertwines them). That's what has to be achieved. If I pass too high or too low, everything is ruined. There mustn't be one single stitch which is too loosely woven, not one gap through which emotion, light, truth might escape. You see, I develop my whole canvas at once, as a unity. Everything disparate I bring together in one outburst, one act of faith... All that we see dissipates, moves on. Nature is always the same, but nothing of her remains, nothing of what appears before us. Our art must provide some fleeting sense of permanence, with the essence, the appearance of her changeability. It must give us an awareness of her eternal qualities. What lies

below her ? Nothing, perhaps. Perhaps everything. Everything, do you see ? And so I join her roaming hands... From right and left, here, there, everywhere, I capture her tones, colours, nuances, I fix them, bring them together. They create lines. They become objects, rocks, trees, without my thinking about it. They acquire a volume. They have tonal value. In these volumes, these values correspond on my canvas—in my sensibility—the planes, the marks which I have established, which are there in front of my eyes, well then, my canvas clasps its hands. It doesn't waver. It passes neither too high nor too low. It is true, compact, full... But if the slightest thing distracts me, if I falter for a moment, especially if one day I interpret more than I should, if today I am carried away by a theory which opposes that of the day before, if I think as I paint, if I intervene—bang ! Everything's gone.

Gasquet: What do you mean, if you intervene ?

Cézanne: The artist is only a receiver of sensations, a brain, a registering machine... A good machine, of course, fragile and complex, especially in relation to others... But if he intervenes, if, paltry as he is, he dares to interfere deliberately with what he has to convey, then his own mediocrity filters through. The work produced is inferior.'

Mont Sainte-Victoire is the motive for which Cézanne is most celebrated and Clark writes that it 'became for him like a ritual act of worship in which he could achieve perfect self-realization.'

In *The Nude* (1956) and *Landscape into Art* (1949) Clark has some astute things to say about Cézanne, other artists, and the motive. So far as I recall he didn't say anything on the subject in his television series *Civilisations* (1969); perhaps he thought that would frighten the horses. In *The Nude* he speaks of the 'characteristic of *disegno*':

'The great draughtsmen of this kind—Signorelli or Michelangelo—are not content to record a movement, as a Tiepolo might do, but press round it, till it approaches some ideal pattern, which lies at the back of the imagination: hence the continual hammering at the same motive, the tracings, copies and replicas which so much astonish the profane.'

Clark compares the motive of Delacroix's drawing of girls wrestling to Michelangelo, 'their bodies round and solid'.

Cézanne's mental repertoire was helped by seeing soldiers bathing in a river. The problem with this was that it led to some of his female nudes looking male. He is in good company here—it afflicts Michelangelo in the San Lorenzo in Florence chapel as well. It also meant that the big paintings of nudes in landscapes, in which he hoped to rival Poussin, had to be done in a studio, from worked-up sketches. So that they were in danger of becoming the dreaded 'machines', as Clark used to call elaborately constructed works of art. For many of us those big strained pictures are the least satisfactory products of Cézanne's oeuvre.

In *The Nude* Clark speaks of Matisse's 'steady traditional pursuit of a few motives.' Again, he does not explain the word. As Clark says, rightly, in *The Nude* Picasso and Cézanne painted ugly nudes not because they wanted to operate in Toulouse Lautrec's slip-stream, but because they wanted to get away from derived and conventional notions of beauty. He speaks of a Matisse motive, and the arm bent backwards is not just a pose which can be covered by the more limited word motif, but a whole way of thinking about the nude, which Picasso also pursued:

'To pretend that these savage distortion have been contrived solely in the interests of pictorial construction is to look at the picture with the mind half closed. On the contrary, the arm bent over the head, a motive used by Matisse as a means of achieving a satisfactory shape, is here given some of its antique force as a symbol of pain, and the displacements of the members all contribute to the same expression of agony.'

Clark does not mention it, but Picasso was having problems with his wife Olga Khokhlova at the time. It's obvious that in this context one needs a word more powerful and suggestive than the limited word motif.

One would like Clark to have said more about Cézanne in *The Nude*. He thinks his 'mastery of execution' can be spoken about in the same breath as Rembrandt and Velasquez. I'm not sure it can—I don't think Cézanne is managing 'that balance between intense participation and absolute detachment'. There is something unsatisfactory about *Les Grandes Baigneuses*, and it is to do with the way they were produced.

In *Landscape into Art* Clark uses the word 'motives' (without explaining it) and says they were 'latent in all Cézanne's early work.' Clark says that Cézanne rejected Impressionist modelling. One sees this in the works themselves, and one sees it in his verbal comments. The preparedness is described; 'So the two shabby houses existed in Cézanne's imagination before he ever visited Gardannes, and might, under different circumstances, have been Roman Senators.' We are not so far removed, at this point, from an observation recorded by Coleridge in *Anima Poetae*:

'In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolical language or something within me that already exists and for ever exists than observing anything new.' (14 April 1805)

Clark speaks of the Quarry of Bibémus as a 'motive which seems to have provoked the greatest violence'. There are a number of paintings with this subject. Another Cézanne motive is Le Château Noir, recorded in a number of paintings.

It's when one looks at these paintings one recognises that Cézanne's programme in no way corresponds to Monet's when he produced multiple versions of Rouen Cathedral. He is not treating the same scene in terms of changing light but changing moods. It emphasises one more time that he was not an Impressionist. Clark is good at explaining that in theory Cézanne is backing an aesthetic which leads to Impressionism, and the word 'sensation' is always in danger of being associated with merely optical reception. What Cézanne was after was something which went beyond this to include the whole being, the '*tempérament*' which was beyond the visual.

* * *

But where did Clark initially get the concept of 'motive' in this particular sense from, in addition to Cézanne? In a broad sense it was from Aby Warburg, whose influential lecture Clarke heard in 1928. But I believe it was also from Ruskin, who uses the word in this sense from time to time. So that when he encountered the concept in Cézanne it was supplemented with extra force from the English writer. I take it that Cézanne did not read Ruskin, perhaps

had scarcely heard of him, and was not influenced by him in his concept of the motive.

Ruskin was a major influence on Clark, and he edited an anthology of his writings in *Ruskin Today* (1964). He recognised that Ruskin has the reputation for clogging his work with morality, politics and religion, but at his best he is capable of looking at paintings directly, as technical and compositional entities. The principal discussion is in *Modern Painters* V, in the chapters 'The Law of Help' and 'The Task of the Least'. He begins his discussion in 'The Law of Help' when he talks about 'INVENTION FORMAL', 'otherwise and most commonly called technical composition; that is to say, the arrangement of lines, forms, or colours, so as to produce the best possible effect.' He realises that composition can be taught, removing the artist from originality, imagination and authenticity, so that invention is required to accomplish these entities.

Clark realises the importance of this passage, because it appears in his anthology *Ruskin Today*. Ruskin writes that 'a great composition always has a leading emotional purpose, technically called its motive, to which all its lines and forms have some relation. Undulating lines, for instance, are expressive of action; and would be false in effect if the motive of the picture was one of repose. Horizontal and angular lines are expressive of rest and strength; and would destroy a design whose purpose was to express disquiet and feebleness.' Ruskin is here referring to motive as it is seen by the critic and spectator, but the implication is that the painter was aware of the motive as he created. And Ruskin is thinking of visual aspects, rather than more abstract and theoretical ones. He looks at Turner's *Rietz near Saumur* and analyses it in detail. 'The motive of the picture, therefore, is the expression of rude but perfect peace, slightly mingled with an indolent languor and despondency.' It is achieved via 'horizontal lines and bold angles.' His analysis goes on for a long time, and in addition to compositional features Ruskin eventually reads the picture as a piece of history, with its meaning and narratives.



Turner *Rietz, near Saumur* (1832) Engraved by R. Brandard. This is based on the painting *The Junction of the Loire and the Vienne near Montsoreau and Candes St. Martin* (c. 1826-30). Brandard has added boats not in the painting. The painting was owned by Ruskin, and is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Then he turns to *The Fall of Schaffhausen*. 'Turner wants to get the great concave sweep and rush of the river well felt, in spite of the unbroken form.'

Again, a lot of essentially pictorial analysis is provided. It's a pity there is not space here to quote it all; it is such brilliant writing. He notes 'the mode in which minor details, both in form and spirit, are used by Turner to aid his main motives.' I think it's clear that the word 'motifs' would not quite do here, because it would not imply as much purpose and inter-relation.

Ruskin refers to the ‘concave sweep and rush of the river’. This is a concave visible to all; it is worth recalling the Cézanne, in contrast, concentrated in his motives on convexes only to be registered by a subtle eye – which goes against the conventional view that scenes are concave. He said to Gasquet, ‘For a long time I was unable, unaware of how to paint Ste-Victoire because I imagined the shadow to be concave, like everyone else who fails to look; but look, it is convex, it flees from its centre.’ At first this is all slightly abstruse, but finally one sees how it makes sense.

There are other examples in Ruskin. Here he is on the subject of Dürer’s hills of Franconia: ‘giving in its steep, though not lofty, rocks, its scattered pines, and its fortresses and chapels, the motives of all the wilder landscape introduced by the painter in such pieces as his St. Jerome, or St. Hubert.’



Dürer, *St Jerome in the Wilderness*



Dürer, *Landscape with a Cannon*.

Ruskin reproduces the village and mountain in the background in *The Elements of Drawing*. The village is Kirchhrehnbach, the mountain is the Walberla, also called Ehrenbürg. I suppose one could say it was Dürer’s Mont Sainte-Victoire.



A detail from Dürer’s *The Cannon*. The village is Kirchhrehnbach, the mountain is the Walberla, also called Ehrenbürg. Reproduced from Ruskin’s *The Elements of Drawing*. Ruskin does not tell us the name of the village or the mountain, neither do Cook and Wedderburn. Ruskin: ‘the dark sky and the dark village’ mean that ‘the scene becomes real and sunny only by the addition of these shades.’

What a pity, then, that Kenneth Clark did not finish his book on motives. It would have been such an interesting thing.

Two Poems for Wolfgang Paalen

1)

Nous montions ensemble une route escaladant une colline verte, la route et la colline couvertes de la même herbe drue et courte. Tu étais à ma droite. Je marchais dans un grand bonheur paisible. ...Nous étions ravis et en extase et je te disais : “Tu te souviens c’est le même lieu où nous avons déjà vu une fois le soleil se coucher ainsi.”

(We were climbing up a green hill, the road and the hill covered with the same stiff short grass. You were on my right. I was walking in a great calm happiness. ...We were overcome with ecstasy, and I said to you: ‘You remember, it’s the same place where we have already seen the sun setting like this.’)

2)

Le pays de Paalen
le pays de l’azur
de l’eau vive sous les bois
et des bêtes de nuit
le pays des totems
et des phares de l’esprit
le feu, l’amour
l’ambre d’éternité
ton passage ici-bas
ton château étoilé.

(The country of Paalen
The country of blue
Of living water under the woods
And night-time beasts
The country of totems
And the mind’s lighthouses
Fire, love
Eternity’s amber
Your passage here below
Your starry castle.)

ALICE RAHON,
translated by MARY ANN CAWS

Alice Paalen Rahon (1904-1987) was a French poet, painter and sculptor. She travelled widely with her first husband, the Austrian painter Wolfgang Paalen, then became Picasso’s lover, but returned to Paalen when he threatened to kill himself (as he did several years later, after two more marriages). She subsequently travelled to India with Valentine Penrose, as well as to Mexico as a painter among other surrealist creators. While there she exhibited widely, but died in poverty.

Mary Ann Caws is Distinguished Professor Emerita of Comparative Literature, English, and French at the Graduate School of CUNY. She is an *Officier of the Palmes académiques*, a *Chevalier dans l’ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, and is the recipient of Guggenheim, Rockefeller, and Getty fellowships, as well as being a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She has published widely on surrealism and modernism, and as a translator of French literature. These poems, the second written after Paalen’s death in 1959, will be included in her forthcoming translations of Rahon’s poems, which will be published by *The New York Review of Books/Poets* in April.

Canadian Poets' Corner: Seymour Mayne

LAURENCE ELDREDGE

SEYMOUR Mayne is one of Canada's senior poets, perhaps even the most senior of currently practicing poets, having started to publish in the early 60s and having produced a steady stream of outstanding poems almost annually ever since. Typically Canadian in that he is the son of immigrants, in his case Jewish parents from Ukraine who managed to get to North America just ahead of the Shoah, Mayne was born in 1944 into a Yiddish-speaking family and community in Montréal from which he took his first steps into a French- and an English-speaking environment. Ever since he began writing, his themes have constantly addressed the same issues: how am I here, a Jewish Canadian survivor, bearing witness to the exiles, the diasporas, the pogroms, the Shoah—how do I celebrate my survival? how not gloat over having survived? how fit into this culture of talaysim and hockey and *coureurs de bois*? Sometimes with a light heart, more often seriously, Mayne has explored and meditated chiefly on these themes. Yet I wouldn't want to suggest that he is repetitive, for his subject is vast and he explores it extensively.

Of course he acknowledges his debt to his early and his immediate predecessors, especially to the Montréal Jewish poets A.M. Klein (1909-1972) and Irving Layton (1912-2006), only tangentially to Leonard Cohen (1934-2016), a slightly older contemporary. His acknowledgement comes in the form of commemorative anthologies: *Irving Layton: the Poet and his Critics* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1978) with critical comments from its editor; with B. Glen Rotchin, *A Rich Garland: Poems for A.M. Klein* (Montréal: Véhicule, 1999), including his own tribute, "For A.M. Klein (1909-1972)". He has also translated poems from Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, Russian, and has been translated into French, Spanish, and Hebrew, to mention only those that I know about.

But far from restricting himself to the past, Mayne has published anthologies of poems from the students in his writing classes, almost annually since he joined the English Department at the University of Ottawa in 1972. Good poets do not occur annually, but Mayne has encouraged at least one outstanding poet, Nicola Vulpe, and has tried to get other promising voices to continue to speak.

For the past twenty or so years, Mayne has occupied himself with an experimental form called The Word Sonnet, which consists of 14 words arranged vertically. When I first came across his early efforts, I was dismissive, thinking that the form offered little chance for development or expansion. But I was wrong. The strength of the word sonnet lies in its capacity to work on the reader, to evoke images, reverie, history rather than expand them. Here is a good example:

Light

Who
believes
in
light
everlasting,
enlightening
silence,
darkness
and
the
first
and
final
word?

The form itself compels a pause at the end of each line, each word, and the pause induces a moment of reflection, or as the title of the collection suggests a *Ricochet*,¹ a bounce. "Who/believes"—well, these days almost no one, but it is still worth asking if only to recall a time when almost everyone did. "Believes/in" and we are already in the realm of conviction—not a direct object, believe something to be the case, or believe that your opponent holds all the cards, but belief "in" conjures things of larger dimensions, things of whose nature we are not quite sure, like everlasting light, like enlightening silence, like darkness. And we are not wrong to hear echoes of Genesis and creation: darkness, silence, and then the first and final word: "Let there be light." We are not asked for our assent, but we are asked to contemplate the possibility of the existence of some "Who" who believes and whose beliefs carry with them a whole culture.

And a ricochet on Canada:

January

After
the
third
fall
even
the
traffic
trails
away
in
the
thick
sinking
snow.²

This one gives pause at the “third/fall” – after Adam and Eve, what other fall was there? But this is Canada, Ottawa or Montréal, where a snowfall can engulf everything, including progress, and “the/thick/sinking/snow” that impedes the traffic pulls the reader into an elemental world where the forces of nature can slow and even stop the flow of modern life. We are not wrong to see a moral judgment in the fall, even the fall of snow, that calls into question all secular life. To evoke so much with so little is a feat worth a moment’s pause.

I’ll venture one further Word Sonnet from the same collection, *Ricochet*:

Yiddish

Echo
of
whisper
as
distant
ghosts
in
their
millions
dream
the
living
into
speech.³

When I was a graduate student in New York City in the late 1950s, Yiddish was still a language you could hear on the streets – Yiddish theatre still attracted audiences to plays by writers like Jacob Gordin and actors like Molly Picon and Menashe Skulnik. But those were its last days, and Mayne’s “Echo” evokes more than the language into which he was born, further back than the “millions” who died at the hands of the Nazis, all the way to the *lingua franca* that developed among the shtetlach of so many countries between eastern Germany and western Russia. In fact to the entire history of a people who endured for thousands of years without a homeland but with a language and a faith to sustain them when little else did. And the “ghosts” are not there to sponsor a revival of Yiddish but rather to stir the living into bearing witness to the very fact of endurance.

For Mayne the summing up is not an extensive epic but rather a distillation. That such an unpromising form can evoke so much is the mark not just of a good poet but of a master. His work deserves far more attention than this brief notice can give it.

¹ *Ricochet: Word Sonnets* (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic, 2004), p. 17; reprinted in *Reflejos: Sonetos de una palabra*, ed. Maria Laura Spoturno (Buenos Aires: Al Margen, 2008), p. 34.

² Also from *Ricochet*, p. 13.

³ Also from *Ricochet*, p. 49.

A Double First for Oxford Medicine

Sir – What a wonderful achievement on the part of Andrew Pollard, Sarah Gilbert, Theresa Lambe and their colleagues working at the Oxford University Jenner Institute. For they have developed an anti-Covid vaccine that can even be ‘tweaked’ to deal with future mutations of the virus, can be stored at a domestic fridge temperature, and is cheap enough to manufacture so as to be available to the poorest of peoples worldwide.

Our successful battle against viral diseases reminds me of the equally pioneering research of Hugh Florey, Ernst Chain, and Norman Heatley, in our Dunn School of Pathology, which made possible the first antibiotic, penicillin, in 1941, and which pointed a way forward for combatting *Coccus* bacterial infections.

So two of the world’s most ghastly pathogen types, bacteria and viruses, after causing untold death and misery down the millennia, first met their match at the hands of two teams of ingenious Oxonians working in two labs a couple of miles apart.

A true Double First for Oxford Medicine.

Yours sincerely
ALLAN CHAPMAN
History Faculty

TO THE EDITOR

A Correction

Sir – The ‘blackly comic “symptomless coma” sketch’ referred to by Dr Bollig (*Oxford Magazine*, no 427, p. 3) appears not in the rather Wildean *Brass Eye* but in the altogether more Kafkaesque *Jam*.

Yours sincerely
ANDREW HUDSON
Coombe, Oxfordshire

The Lamb and Flag

Sir – I read in the *Oxford Mail* that St John’s once again proposes to close the Lamb and Flag, which it argues loses money.

In Covid times of course it does.

Perhaps it did before, and the College argues that it is by law bound not to lose money, and its defenders will maintain that it is nobody’s business but theirs. But it is a fine historic pub and a landmark, and St Giles will be the poorer without it. To close it now certainly adds to the current depression.

Yours sincerely
MALCOLM DEAS
St Antony’s College

CONTENTS

No. 428 Second Week Hilary Term 2021

Paper or Virtual BEN BOLLIG, TIM HORDER	1	What to do about the Vice-Chancellorship? PETER OPPENHEIMER	10
Necessary Evils ANDREW MARTIN	2	Notes from Cambridge G.R. EVANS	12
Not another survey! DOROTHY V.M. BISHOP	4	Let's twist again, like the way we did last summer BERNARD RICHARDS	14
Oxford's Environmental Sustainability Strategy – letting it roll? PAULO BENTO MAFFEI DE SOUZA and BARBARA HARRISS-WHITE	5	Two Poems for Wolfgang Paalen ALICE RAHON translated by MARY ANN CAWS	17
Peer Review – the Gold Standard? RICHARD CLOGG	7	Canadian Poets' Corner: Seymour Mayne LAURENCE ELDREDGE	18
Diptych The Psychoanalyst TARA LEE	9	Letters to the Editor	19
Meter Maid Dreamtime DUNCAN WU	9		

Meanwhile, an update on the *Magazine's* new scheme for inviting questions from staff members on matters of concern to them for forwarding to Wellington Square for authoritative answers. So far we have forwarded three questions. As yet we have received no answers.

Questions and answers will be published in our new Q&A column as soon as possible; answers will be forwarded to questioners themselves as soon as they are received. We remind readers that their names will only be revealed to Wellington Square or published in the Q&A column with their prior agreement, in order to allow greater freedom for staff to raise controversial or sensitive issues with safety.

Please send us your questions.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

• **Andrew Martin** is a Professor of Systems Security in the Department of Computer Science • **Dorothy Bishop** is Professor of Developmental Neuropsychology • **Paulo de Souza** is a DPhil student at Wolfson College • **Barbara Harriss-White** is an Emeritus Fellow, Wolfson College • **Richard Clogg** is an Emeritus Fellow of St Antony's College • **Peter Oppenheimer** is a Student of Christ Church • **G. R. Evans** was Professor of Medieval Theology and Intellectual History at Cambridge • **Bernard Richards** is an Emeritus Fellow of Brasenose College • **Laurence Eldredge** is a retired Professor of English from the University of Ottawa •